

ON
THE IMPROVEMENT
OF
FINE WOOLS IN SCOTLAND,
BY THE INTRODUCTION OF
SILESIAN FLOCKS.

By C. E. F. SYLVESTER.

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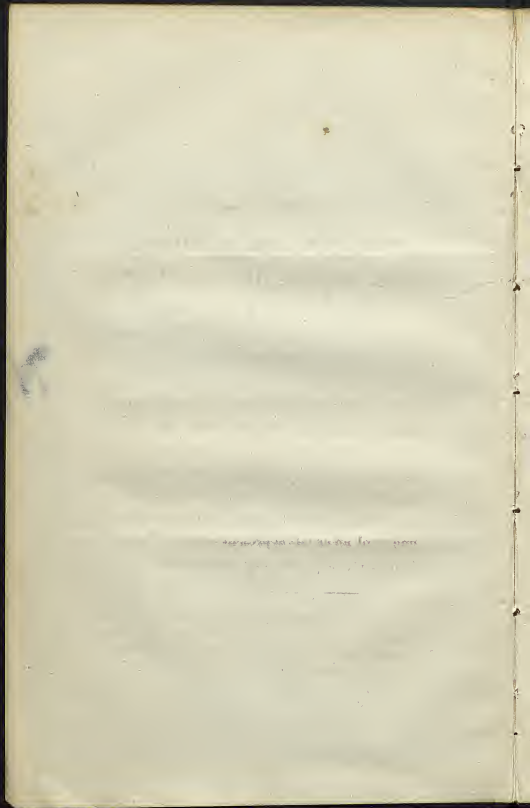
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TO HIS GRACE
THE DUKE OF GORDON,
THE PROMOTER OF
EVERY USEFUL ART AND SCIENCE
WHICH TENDS TO
THE ADVANCEMENT AND GOOD OF HIS COUNTRY,
THIS PLAN FOR THE
IMPROVEMENT OF FINE WOOL IN SCOTLAND
IS HUMBLY DEDICATED BY
THE AUTHOR.



ON
THE IMPROVEMENT
OF
FINE WOOLS IN SCOTLAND,
&c. &c.

It is a matter of surprise, in a country where science, industry, and agriculture, have made such rapid progress, that it is justly considered the first in the world in point of mercantile enterprise and superior cultivation, that no particular attention has hitherto been paid to the produce of fine wool, an article at present imported from the Continent, viz. Germany and Spain.* In a

* The latter country, since the late revolutionary wars, having ceased to be the first in the produce of fine wool, superior qualities have been cultivated in the more northern parts of Saxony, Silesia, and Bohemia.

country like Britain, where the consumption of these fine wools imported from abroad amounts to nearly three millions Sterling annually, it becomes an object of the highest importance, and it must not only awaken the jealous eye of the patriot, but demands the serious consideration of the nation at large, that Britain should be compelled, as the wants of the manufacturer require, to import a material from a foreign nation, leaving to him the right of monopoly in the traffic of an article which this country may easily be made to produce in abundance, thus enabling him to draw ready money out of Britain, without leaving this country the least chance of reciprocity by the returns of manufactured goods.

The latest Parliamentary inquiries of the Wool Committee, before the House of Lords,* will not only at once convince the reader of the

* It would be presumptuous to refer the reader to the evidence before the House of Lords, consisting of 599 folio pages; but let me, at the same time, recommend the perusal of a letter and extracts published by the Earl Stanhope, who was a member of the above-named Committee.

truth of the statement, that in case of war between Great Britain and the Continent, the manufacturer is entirely left to the mercy of the wool-growers and speculators abroad,* but he will have at the same time occasion to learn from them the want of the requisite knowledge attributed to the sheep-farmer in this country, for the production of fine fleeces,† and additional proofs that this country is not likely to produce wool of good quality, while so trifling a duty exists on foreign wool, and that no encouragement has been held out by Government for the protection of the sheep-farmer in the production of a better material.‡

* This has been the case from the year 1798 to 1813, in which time not only foreign manufacturers increased the production of cloth on the Continent, but also excluded the British manufacturer entirely out of the market in his own territories and colonies, in consequence of the want of the requisite *prima materia*.

† The British farmer being too much wedded to the old system of his forefathers, preferring to gain profit from the carcass, without paying the least attention to the fleece.

‡ Referring to the letter by Earl Stanhope, the reader will not only be at once convinced of the contradic-

It is, therefore, proposed by the Author to call a Public Meeting, in which he hopes to be able to convince the gentlemen interested, and the nation at large, of the possibility of gaining fine wool in this country equal to that of Germany, by the introduction of a flock from Silesia,* a country situated in the northern part of Prussia, the most mountainous province in Germany, surrounded by two distinct chains of mountains, equal in height to the Grampians and other hills in Scotland, and similar not only in point of climate, but in the barrenness of their productions, their growth consisting of heath and moss.†

tory statements made by the wool-dealers and manufacturers of this country, but will have occasion to learn, that the trifling duty imposed on foreign wool has occasioned the depression of the home-grown material.

* The finest wool imported into this country comes from Silesia, but goes under the misnomer of Saxon. The latter kingdom has been reduced to a mere circle since the late concluded peace, and consists now only of two principal cities, Leipsig and Dresden. Both are surrounded by Prussian dominions.

† See the Map. The province of Silesia is situated in the midst of ten different countries, as Poland, Hungary,

By this measure the manufacturer may be entirely supplied, in the course of five years, with a material grown in this country,* for the mutual advantage of farmer and manufacturer, and to render the latter independent of foreign supplies.

But, at the same time, let it be well understood, that the introduction of the foreign flock has in no way the least interference with sheep-breeding in general; and that the management of the Silesian sheep is proposed to be separately conducted by the shepherds brought from that country, who will form in time a

Bohemia, Saxony, Moravia, Austria, Lusatia, the Duchy of Posen, the Mark, and the free town of Cracow, and also by the principal chains of Giant Mountains and Sudets, which are covered with snow through the whole Winter, and the greatest part of the Summer.

* Surely the many thousands of acres of uncultivated land in Scotland demand the attention of this country, especially when, in its present state, it is not worth one shilling per acre, as for instance in Sutherland and Caithness, and this very tract of land we have now named may produce the finest wool in the kingdom.



colony by themselves,* for the sole purpose of gaining fine fleeces.

* Foreign colonies are an advantage to a country which is in possession of an uncultivated tract of land. They give encouragement to the natives, and introduce agricultural products which were formerly not known. For instance, the Silesian Hills produce in the Summer months madder, a dye stuff requisite for procuring a good red colour. Scotland has already two colonies of foreigners, one at Buckhaven, consisting of Danish fishers, which were driven on the Fife shore a century ago, and having been allowed a small portion of land by the Earl of Wemyss, they built huts about the harbour where they landed, and became fishers, so that both men and women go out every day to fish as they have been accustomed to do in their own country. They have never intermingled much with the neighbouring inhabitants, and they still bear the marks of their Scandinavian origin, by their manners, pronunciation, and dress. There is also a colony of shipwrecked Danes in the marshy grounds on the sea-side, in the parish of Leuchars, between the mouths of the Tay and the Eden, that is, between St. Andrew's and Dundee. This colony is on a much greater scale than that at Buckhaven; they do not live in one town or large village like the fishers of Buckhaven, but are scattered over a wide and poor tract of land. They not only confine themselves to fishing, but try to cultivate the moors or marshes of Leuchars, and are commonly called the Danes. Both colonies have the name of being very hospitable, industrious, and prosperous in their respective occupations and concerns.

The experience and practice of the foreigners will give ample proof to the sheep-farmer at home, that the country is better suited for that purpose than any other part of Great Britain, and convince them of the impossibility of gaining fat carcasses and fine wool at the same time.*

It is to be hoped, therefore, that some influential body, or public-spirited individuals, will take this plan into their serious consideration. With this view, the Author submits it to notice. He will pledge himself to render every assistance to the perfecting and completing it, which his practical knowledge of the subject, and acquaintance with the details, enable him to afford.

* See a Letter in the Inverness Journal, by Sir George Mackenzie, and two Practical Observations in the Globe, by Mr. J. K. Trimmer in Middlesex. Gaining a fat carcass is, in their opinion, a great object for the British farmer, and is not to be neglected; but even the farmer who gives his attention to the carcass will be able to gain a good price for his fleece; as no English fine cloth can be manufactured without mixing native wool with the foreign material.—See *Extract of the Wool Committee*.

The measure must be carried into execution without delay, for reasons which will readily suggest themselves to those who are aware of the vigilance and exclusive policy of the Prussian Government.

Since the last four years Silesian sheep have been constantly exported to Van Diemen's Land; and, as a proof of the success of this transplantation, reference may be made to the importation of this year from that quarter, amounting to two millions pounds of wool of superior quality. The diminishing demand of the material on the Continent will soon open the eyes of the Foreign wool-grower.

Common ground, or pastures, may be *feued* or bought in the counties of Aberdeen, Perth, Ross, Sutherland, Inverness, and Caithness, considered as the best suited spots for the foreign flock.

For the furtherance of this, the Author proposes publishing the following information regarding the subject :—

1. Practical Observations on Sheep-breeding in general.
2. Proofs of the possibility of producing Fine Wools in Scotland equal to those of Silesia.
3. Proofs that the Highlands of Scotland are better adapted for Sheep-breeding than any other part of Great Britain.
4. The benefit to be derived from the introduction of foreign shepherds and dogs.
5. The advantage of a foreign colony in the Highlands.
6. Influence of climate on sheep, and reasons why the Spanish flocks, introduced in Britain, did not prove successful.
7. Similarity of climates of Scotland and Silesia.
8. Newly adapted system of cross-breeding applicable to Shetland and Silesian sheep.
9. Observations on twice clipping, a method adopted in Silesia.

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